

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please AMEND claims 1, 3, 17 and 20 as follows.

A copy of all pending claims and a status of the claims are provided below.

1. (currently amended) A mail edge biasing machine for sorting stacks of products in a homogenous orientation, comprising:

a plurality of compartments;

a plurality of moveable plates associated with each of the plurality of compartments;

detecting means for detecting differences in bound and non-bound edges of the products;

and

a stationary feed head mechanism positioned proximate a central compartment of the plurality of compartments, the feed head mechanism being capable of transporting the products from the central compartment to remaining compartments of the plurality of compartments,

wherein the feed head mechanism allows arrangement of products transported to the remaining compartments to be each stacked proximate the moveable plates and oriented with bound edges in the homogenous orientation according to an output of the detecting means.

2. (original) The mail edge biasing machine of claim 1, wherein the feed head mechanism separately transports each of the products from the central compartment to the remaining compartments.

3. (currently amended) The mail edge biasing machine of claim 1, wherein the central moveable plate supports the products which have the bound edges oriented in opposing directions.

4. (original) The mail edge biasing machine of claim 1, wherein the plurality of compartments includes the central compartment and opposing side compartments.

5. (original) The mail edge biasing machine of claim 1, wherein the feed head mechanism comprises:

a belt driven transportation mechanism having a plurality of suction ports; and a vacuum source in communication with the plurality of suction ports.

6. (previously presented) The mail edge biasing machine of claim 5, wherein the belt driven transportation mechanism is two belt driven transportation mechanisms adapted to transport stack of products in opposing directions from the central compartment to the remaining compartments which are opposing side compartments.

7. (original) The mail edge biasing machine of claim 6, wherein the vacuum source, via the plurality of suction ports, moves a product of the stack of products from the central compartment for transportation to either of the opposing side compartments.

8. (original) The mail edge biasing machine of claim 1, further comprising moveable walls separating each of the plurality of compartments.

9. (previously presented) The mail edge biasing machine of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of belt drives for incrementally moving the plurality of moveable plates and stacks of products.

10. (previously presented) The mail edge biasing machine of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of bottom elevator moving systems for incrementally moving the plurality of moveable plates and stacks of products, and which allows tops of the stacks of products to remain in a fixed plane relative to the feed head mechanism.

11. (currently amended) The mail edge biasing machine of claim 1, wherein the feed head mechanism includes the detecting means which is an optical edge recognition system for detecting a bound edge of the product.

12. (original) The mail edge biasing machine of claim 11, wherein information received from the optical edge recognition system is used for separately transporting products of the stack of products from the central compartment to the remaining compartments which are opposing side compartments, thereby orienting the stack of products on each of the opposing side compartments with bound edges in the homogenous orientation.

13. (original) A mail edge biasing system, comprising:
a general holding container divided into three separate compartments;
opposing moveable guide walls separating the three separate compartments;
moveable plates associated with each of the three separate compartments, the moveable plates being adapted to move in either a first direction or a second direction;
a feed head mechanism positioned over a central compartment of the three separate compartments, the feed head mechanism including:
an optical edge recognition system for recognizing differences in bound and non-bound edges of the products; and
a movement mechanism for moving products positioned proximate a central moveable plate from the central compartment to opposing side compartments of the three separate compartments based on the recognition of the bound and non-bound edges of the products.

14. (previously presented) The mail edge biasing system of claim 13, wherein the movement mechanism is two belt driven systems and each of the two belt driven systems includes a plurality of suctioning ports for moving or elevating the products positioned proximate the central moveable plate.

15. (previously presented) The mail edge biasing system of claim 14, wherein the two belt driven systems to move the products from the central compartment to the opposing side compartments based on information received from the optical edge recognition system.

16. (original) The mail edge biasing system of claim 13, further comprising a belt driven system for moving the moveable plates, wherein a central moveable plate is incrementally moveable towards the head feed mechanism and opposing side moveable plates are incrementally moveable away from the feed head mechanism.

17. (currently amended) A method of orienting a stack of products in a same direction, comprising the steps of:

providing a stack of products in a central compartment;
incrementally moving the stack of products in the central compartment towards a feed head mechanism;
detecting a difference between bound and non-bound edges of a top product of the stack of products; and
transporting the top product to one of two side compartments based on the detecting step, wherein all products transported to a first of the two side compartments are oriented in a first same direction and all products transported to a second of the two side compartments are oriented in a second same direction.

18. (original) The method of claim 17, further comprising repeating the steps of claim 17 until the stack of products in the central compartment is depleted.

19. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein the product is elevated by the feed head mechanism.

20. (currently amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the detecting step is based on a difference in thickness between at least two of the edges of a same product to determine [[a]] the bound edge and [[a]] the non bound edge of the top product.

21. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein the transporting step includes elevating the top product.

22. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the moveable plates include at least a center plate and two opposing side plates, the center plate moveable in a first direction and the two opposing side plates moveable in a second opposing direction.